

The Taiwan Lafayette Ship Scandal: Arms Procurement, Political Corruption, Transnational Finance, and the Crisis of Public Accountability

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ABSTRACT

The Taiwan Lafayette ship scandal, also known as the Taiwan frigate scandal, represents one of the most controversial arms-procurement affairs in modern Taiwanese and French history. At the center of the controversy was Taiwan's purchase of six French-made La Fayette-class frigates in 1991 in a contract valued at approximately US\$2.5 billion, or about 14.6–16 billion French francs depending on the accounting basis used. The procurement was politically sensitive because France had to balance commercial interests against pressure from the People's Republic of China, which opposed the transfer of advanced military equipment to Taiwan. Subsequent investigations raised allegations that hundreds of millions of dollars in commissions and kickbacks were associated with the transaction. The case also became intertwined with the suspicious death of Taiwanese Navy Captain Yin Ching-Feng in 1993, although the precise relationship between his death and the procurement scandal has remained contested. The affair subsequently involved investigations in Taiwan, France, Switzerland, and other jurisdictions, demonstrating the difficulty of regulating transnational arms transactions. This study examines the historical background of the Lafayette procurement, the political and institutional conditions that facilitated the controversy, allegations of corruption and illicit commissions, the Yin Ching-Feng case, international investigations, and the broader implications for Taiwan's defense procurement system. It argues that the Lafayette scandal should be understood not merely as an isolated corruption case but as a structural failure involving secrecy, intermediaries, geopolitical competition, weak procurement transparency, and inadequate mechanisms for international accountability.

Keywords: Taiwan Lafayette Ship Scandal; French History; French-Made La Fayette-Class; Kickbacks; International Accountability.

INTRODUCTION

Military procurement occupies a particularly sensitive position in democratic governance because governments must simultaneously protect national security, manage public resources, and maintain accountability. The difficulty becomes greater when procurement involves sophisticated weapons systems, international contractors, confidential negotiations, political intermediaries, and competing geopolitical interests. The Taiwan Lafayette ship scandal provides a significant case study of these problems. The scandal concerned Taiwan's purchase of six La Fayette-class frigates from France (Figure.1) (Samaan, 2025). The contract was signed in August 1991 and involved Thomson-CSF, a major French defense-electronics company, together with France's naval construction establishment (Harsin, 2025). Contemporary reporting described the contract as one of the largest French arms agreements of the period, with a value of approximately 14.6 billion French francs. The transaction was politically extraordinary because France had previously faced strong Chinese opposition to arms sales to Taiwan. The controversy expanded substantially after allegations emerged concerning secret commissions and payments associated with the procurement. Former French foreign minister Roland Dumas later alleged that the total amount of commissions connected to the transaction could have reached approximately US\$500 million, while other contemporary 'possibly' estimates placed the alleged 'kickbacks' as high as US\$760 million. These

figures should be treated as allegations and estimates rather than as a single universally established amount. The scandal acquired an even more serious dimension after the death of Taiwanese Navy Captain Yin Ching-Feng in December 1993 (Sung, 2009). Yin had been involved in naval procurement, and his body was subsequently found at sea. His death generated widespread suspicion that it might have been connected to irregularities surrounding military procurement. However, the existence of suspicions should not be confused with definitive proof that the Lafayette transaction caused or directly resulted in his death. This study examines the Lafayette scandal as a case of transnational corruption and institutional vulnerability. Rather than treating the affair simply as an accusation against individual officials, it considers how the interaction of national security secrecy, international arms markets, political lobbying, intermediaries, offshore financial structures, and weak oversight created conditions in which corruption allegations could emerge and remain difficult to resolve.

Research Background

Military procurement occupies a particularly sensitive position within democratic governance because states must simultaneously protect national security, allocate substantial public resources, and preserve institutional accountability. These challenges become especially complex when procurement involves advanced weapons systems, confidential negotiations, foreign defense contractors, political intermediaries, and transnational financial arrangements. The Taiwan Lafayette ship scandal represents a significant case through which these tensions can be examined. The controversy centered on Taiwan's acquisition of six La Fayette-class frigates from France under a contract signed in August 1991. The agreement involved Thomson-CSF, a major French defense-electronics company, and France's naval construction establishment, and was reportedly valued at approximately 14.6 billion French francs. The transaction was politically sensitive because French arms sales to Taiwan had historically encountered strong opposition from the People's Republic of China. The scandal intensified following allegations that substantial secret commissions and illicit payments had been associated with the procurement. Former French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas subsequently suggested that commissions connected to the transaction could have reached approximately US\$500 million, while other contemporary estimates placed the alleged kickbacks as high as US\$760 million. Such figures remain subject to differing interpretations and should therefore be understood as allegations or estimates rather than as a single conclusively established amount. The controversy also became associated with the 1993 death of Taiwanese Navy Captain Yin Ching-Feng, who had been involved in naval procurement. His body was discovered at sea, generating widespread suspicion that his death might have been connected to procurement irregularities. Nevertheless, suspicion should not be presented as definitive evidence establishing a causal relationship between his death and the Lafayette transaction. Against this background, the present study examines the scandal as a case of transnational corruption and institutional vulnerability. It moves beyond an individual-centered interpretation to investigate how national-security secrecy, international arms markets, political influence, financial intermediaries, offshore structures, and weaknesses in oversight can interact to undermine transparency and public accountability. The Lafayette affair therefore provides an important historical and governance-based framework for understanding the difficulties democracies face when national security and public accountability collide in international military procurement.

Historical and Political Background

The origins of the Lafayette controversy can be traced to Taiwan's search for modern naval capabilities during the late Cold War period. Taiwan faced a difficult strategic environment in which military modernization was closely connected to its relationship with the People's Republic of China. At the same time, Taiwan's diplomatic isolation limited the number of countries willing to sell sophisticated weapons systems to Taipei. France's decision to sell the frigates was therefore politically significant. The proposed transaction encountered resistance because Beijing regarded Taiwan as part of China and opposed foreign military assistance to Taiwan. According to archival reporting, the French government initially approved the project but later postponed it under pressure related to relations with Beijing. The sale eventually received approval in 1991, and the contract was signed in August of that year.

The political controversy surrounding the contract was closely connected with the commercial importance of the transaction. French defense companies had a strong incentive to secure the sale, while Taiwan wanted access to advanced naval technology. This created a complex intersection between economic interests, national security,

diplomatic policy, and arms-export controls. The procurement was also unusual from Taiwan's perspective. Contemporary reports noted that the frigates were larger and more expensive than vessels originally contemplated under Taiwan's coastal-defense requirements. The approximately US\$2.5 billion price made the purchase one of Taiwan's most significant defense procurements at the time.

Consequently, the transaction was never simply a technical purchase of warships. It represented a major strategic decision involving France's foreign policy, Taiwan's defense requirements, China's diplomatic pressure, and the interests of international defense corporations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary case-study methodology to examine the Taiwan Lafayette Ship Scandal as a transnational arms-procurement controversy involving political corruption, financial secrecy, institutional failure, and public accountability. The research treats the scandal not merely as an isolated procurement dispute but as a complex governance case in which national security, diplomatic relations, commercial interests, and illicit financial networks intersected. A historical case-study approach is appropriate because the controversy developed over an extended period and involved events and institutional responses across Taiwan, France, Switzerland, and other jurisdictions. The study relies primarily on documentary and secondary-source analysis. Relevant materials include academic literature, archival and contemporary news reports, judicial and governmental documents, parliamentary or investigative materials, financial-investigation records, and scholarly case studies concerning international arms procurement and corruption. Particular attention is given to evidence concerning the 1991 frigate contract, alleged commissions, the activities of intermediaries such as Andrew Wang, the death of Captain Yin Ching-Feng, international investigations, and the subsequent recovery of allegedly illicit funds. Sources are compared across jurisdictions to identify areas of agreement, contradiction, and evidentiary uncertainty.

A process-tracing strategy is employed to reconstruct the development of the scandal from the initial procurement decision through allegations of secret commissions, investigations, financial tracing, and institutional responses. The analysis also distinguishes documented facts from allegations, political claims, media reports, and unresolved interpretations. This distinction is particularly important because estimates of alleged commissions vary substantially and because the circumstances surrounding Yin Ching-Feng's death have generated claims that cannot automatically be treated as established causal facts. The study further applies a governance and accountability framework focusing on transparency, intermediary regulation, financial oversight, whistleblower protection, institutional independence, and international cooperation. Through thematic analysis, recurring institutional weaknesses are identified and connected to broader debates concerning corruption risks in defense procurement. Finally, the study uses the Lafayette affair as a comparative governance case to derive lessons for contemporary defense-procurement systems while avoiding unsupported generalization from a single historical case.

The Allegations of Commissions and Corruption

The central issue in the Lafayette scandal was the allegation that large secret commissions were paid to intermediaries and political actors to facilitate the transaction. The precise structure and destination of these payments became the subject of investigations in several countries.

Contemporary French reporting described the contract as having been surrounded by secret financial arrangements involving intermediaries and offshore entities. One particularly important element involved allegations concerning an intermediary connected with Taiwanese and French arms networks. Later investigations identified Taiwanese businessman Andrew Wang as a central figure in the financial controversy. Taiwanese prosecutors alleged that Wang and members of his family used companies and bank accounts in multiple jurisdictions to receive illicit commissions.

The scale of the alleged payments was extraordinary. Former French foreign minister Roland Dumas publicly referred to a commission of approximately US\$500 million, while other reports referred to figures approaching US\$760 million. The different figures illustrate one of the central methodological problems of the scandal:

evidence came from court proceedings, investigative journalism, political statements, banking records, testimony, and allegations made by individuals with different interests in the controversy.

A 2009 academic case study by Hung-En Sung characterized the Lafayette affair as a major example of transnational corruption in weapons procurement and examined the structural and institutional deficiencies in Taiwan and France that created opportunities for corruption. The study emphasized that the scandal was not simply the result of individual misconduct but involved institutional weaknesses spanning multiple jurisdictions.

This distinction is important. Arms procurement is particularly vulnerable to corruption because transactions are often conducted under conditions of confidentiality. Governments may legitimately withhold technical information concerning weapons systems, but excessive secrecy can also make financial decisions difficult to scrutinize. When brokers and consultants are involved, it may become difficult to determine whether a payment represents a legitimate professional fee or an illicit inducement.

The Role of Intermediaries

One of the most significant characteristics of the Lafayette scandal was the role of intermediaries. International defense transactions frequently involve agents who provide market intelligence, facilitate contacts, assist negotiations, and interpret political or institutional environments. Such intermediaries may have legitimate functions. However, they can also create opportunities for hidden payments.

Andrew Wang became one of the most controversial figures in the Lafayette affair. Investigative accounts describe him as an intermediary associated with Thomson-CSF and as a central participant in the financial arrangements surrounding the contract. Taiwanese authorities later pursued allegations involving bribery, money laundering, and related offenses. Swiss authorities also investigated financial accounts connected with the affair.

The use of intermediaries becomes especially problematic when their compensation is based on unusually large commissions or when the identities of ultimate beneficiaries are concealed through offshore corporations and financial accounts. The complexity of the Lafayette case demonstrates how a procurement transaction can move beyond the direct control of the purchasing government and defense contractor.

The problem is further complicated by the fact that corruption in international arms transactions may involve multiple countries simultaneously. Payments can originate in one country, pass through financial institutions in another, and ultimately reach individuals or organizations in a third jurisdiction. This makes conventional national investigations insufficient.

The Yin Ching-Feng Case

The death of Captain Yin Ching-Feng transformed the Lafayette affair from a major financial scandal into a case with profound implications for Taiwan's national security and rule of law. Yin was associated with Taiwan's naval weapons procurement activities. In December 1993, his body was found in waters near Taiwan's northeastern coast. His death was widely regarded as suspicious and became linked in public discussion with alleged irregularities in military procurement. Contemporary accounts reported that Yin had been involved in the procurement system and that his death generated substantial concern about corruption within military contracting.

It is essential, however, to distinguish documented facts from allegations. The suspicious circumstances surrounding Yin's death generated theories that he may have possessed sensitive information about military procurement, but public suspicion alone does not establish a proven causal connection between his death and the Lafayette contract.

Nevertheless, the case had an important institutional consequence. It intensified public demands for investigation into defense procurement and highlighted the potential dangers faced by officials who challenge entrenched interests. The combination of a large international arms contract, allegations of enormous secret commissions, and the unexplained or disputed circumstances surrounding the death of a naval officer profoundly damaged public confidence.

The Yin case therefore became a symbol of the broader accountability problem. If procurement officials cannot safely investigate irregularities, then formal procurement regulations become insufficient. Effective accountability requires not only rules but also institutional independence, protection for investigators and whistleblowers, judicial oversight, and mechanisms through which allegations can be examined without political interference.

International Investigations and Financial Recovery

The transnational character of the Lafayette scandal required cooperation among Taiwan, France, Switzerland, and other jurisdictions. Swiss financial institutions became particularly important because alleged illicit proceeds were reportedly transferred into Swiss accounts.

Swiss authorities froze accounts associated with Andrew Wang and his family in 2001. Later proceedings identified substantial sums connected to the alleged commissions. In February 2021, Switzerland agreed to return approximately US\$265 million in funds described as illegal commissions related to the transaction.

These developments demonstrate the importance of international financial cooperation in combating corruption. Traditional criminal investigations often focus on individuals and physical evidence, whereas modern corruption investigations increasingly require examination of bank transfers, shell companies, beneficial ownership, and cross-border financial networks.

The recovery of funds also raises an important distinction between legal accountability and political accountability. Recovering allegedly illicit assets can compensate the state financially, but it does not necessarily resolve questions concerning who authorized the payments, why procurement decisions were made, or whether institutional safeguards failed.

Institutional and Governance Failures

The Lafayette scandal illustrates several institutional weaknesses.

First, excessive secrecy can reduce public oversight. National security considerations are legitimate, but secrecy should be limited to information whose disclosure would genuinely threaten national defense.

Second, dependence on intermediaries can obscure responsibility. Procurement authorities should know who represents contractors, how intermediaries are compensated, and who ultimately benefits from payments.

Third, weak financial transparency can allow illicit funds to move through offshore jurisdictions. Effective procurement governance therefore requires beneficial-ownership disclosure, transaction monitoring, auditing, and international cooperation.

Fourth, political influence can distort procurement decisions. When defense contracts become instruments of diplomatic or political bargaining, commercial and security assessments may become subordinate to political interests.

Fifth, insufficient whistleblower protection can undermine internal accountability. The Yin Ching-Feng controversy demonstrates why procurement officials must be able to report suspected wrongdoing without fear of retaliation.

These problems are not unique to Taiwan. International arms procurement has historically been vulnerable to corruption because it combines enormous financial values with secrecy and political sensitivity. The Lafayette case is therefore valuable as a comparative case for defense-governance research.

Legal and Ethical Implications

The scandal also raises fundamental ethical questions concerning the use of public money for national defense. Governments have an obligation to protect citizens, but this responsibility does not authorize unlimited secrecy or corruption.

From a public ethics perspective, defense procurement should satisfy at least four principles: necessity, proportionality, transparency, and accountability. A weapon system should be demonstrably necessary for national security; its cost should be proportionate to its strategic value; procurement procedures should be transparent to the maximum extent compatible with national security; and decision-makers should remain accountable for misconduct.

The Lafayette affair demonstrates what happens when these principles become disconnected. A government may have legitimate security reasons to purchase advanced weapons, but legitimate national-defense objectives cannot justify bribery or the misuse of public funds.

The affair also demonstrates the ethical importance of institutional trust. Public confidence in defense institutions depends not only on whether military equipment performs effectively but also on whether citizens believe procurement decisions are made in the public interest.

Lessons for Taiwan's Defense Procurement System

The Lafayette scandal offers several lessons for contemporary defense procurement.

First, major military contracts should undergo independent financial auditing. Technical secrecy should not prevent independent auditors from examining pricing, commissions, and contractual structures.

Second, governments should establish strict rules concerning defense-industry intermediaries. All agents should be registered, their compensation should be documented, and ultimate beneficiaries should be identifiable.

Third, procurement authorities should strengthen whistleblower protection and investigative independence. Individuals who identify corruption should have confidential reporting mechanisms and legal protection.

Fourth, Taiwan should maintain strong international cooperation concerning suspicious financial transactions. The later recovery of funds from Swiss accounts demonstrates the importance of cross-border judicial and financial collaboration.

Finally, defense procurement should be separated as far as possible from partisan political interests. National security decisions require professional military and technical evaluation rather than dependence on political connections.

DISCUSSION

The Taiwan Lafayette Ship Scandal demonstrates that corruption in defense procurement cannot be understood solely as the misconduct of individual officials or intermediaries. Rather, the affair reveals how strategic necessity, diplomatic pressure, commercial interests, political influence, financial secrecy, and institutional weakness can interact to produce systemic accountability failures. Taiwan's acquisition of the Lafayette-class frigates occurred within an exceptionally complex geopolitical environment. Its diplomatic isolation and security concerns created strong incentives to obtain advanced naval capabilities, while France faced competing pressures arising from its defense industry and relations with the People's Republic of China. Consequently, the approximately US\$2.5 billion transaction represented not merely a military acquisition but a strategic and political decision with substantial financial consequences.

A central finding is that the secrecy surrounding arms procurement created conditions in which questionable financial practices could remain difficult to detect. National-security considerations can legitimately restrict public access to technical and operational information, but the Lafayette affair illustrates the danger of extending such confidentiality to financial arrangements and intermediary relationships. Allegations concerning secret commissions, offshore companies, and concealed beneficiaries demonstrate how commercial confidentiality can become intertwined with inadequate public oversight. The differing estimates of alleged commissions—ranging from approximately US\$500 million to figures approaching US\$760 million—also demonstrate the difficulties of establishing the complete financial history of complex international transactions. Such discrepancies reinforce

the need to distinguish carefully between verified evidence, judicial findings, investigative reporting, and political allegations.

The role of intermediaries is particularly significant. International arms brokers can provide legitimate expertise, facilitate negotiations, and assist contractors in navigating unfamiliar political environments. However, when intermediary compensation becomes unusually large, opaque, or difficult to justify, these arrangements can create substantial corruption risks. The Lafayette case, particularly the allegations surrounding Andrew Wang and associated companies and accounts, illustrates how intermediary networks can obscure the relationship between a defense contractor, government officials, and ultimate recipients of payments. The transnational movement of funds further complicated accountability because financial transactions could cross several jurisdictions before reaching their final destination. This suggests that domestic procurement rules alone are insufficient for controlling corruption in international defense markets.

The controversy surrounding the death of Captain Yin Ching-Feng further intensified the accountability crisis. His death in 1993 became closely associated in public discourse with allegations of corruption in military procurement. Nevertheless, analytical caution is essential: suspicion concerning a possible connection between Yin's death and the Lafayette affair should not be treated as established fact without conclusive evidence. The broader significance of the case lies instead in its institutional consequences. The controversy reinforced perceptions that officials involved in sensitive procurement could face serious risks when confronting powerful interests. Effective accountability therefore requires more than formal regulations. It requires independent investigations, protection for whistleblowers and procurement officials, judicial oversight, and institutional mechanisms capable of investigating allegations without political interference.

The international investigations also demonstrate the growing importance of financial transparency in combating corruption. Swiss investigations and the subsequent freezing and recovery of funds associated with the affair showed that financial accountability could extend beyond the jurisdiction in which a procurement decision was made. The return of approximately US\$265 million in 2021 illustrates the practical value of international judicial and financial cooperation. At the same time, asset recovery should not be regarded as a complete substitute for institutional accountability. Recovering illicitly obtained funds can reduce financial losses to the state, but it cannot by itself explain why questionable payments were authorized, which institutions failed to detect them, or whether political decision-making contributed to the problem.

From a governance perspective, the Lafayette scandal exposes several interconnected weaknesses: excessive secrecy, inadequate oversight of intermediaries, insufficient financial transparency, political influence, and weak protection for individuals reporting misconduct. These weaknesses are mutually reinforcing. Secrecy limits scrutiny; opaque intermediary arrangements make financial monitoring difficult; weak monitoring allows illicit transactions to remain concealed; and insufficient whistleblower protection discourages internal reporting. The result is an accountability gap in which responsibility becomes fragmented among governments, contractors, brokers, financial institutions, and political actors.

The ethical implications are equally significant. Defense procurement involves public resources and is justified by the collective interest in national security. However, national security cannot provide an unrestricted justification for secrecy, excessive expenditure, or corruption. Ethical procurement should therefore be guided by necessity, proportionality, transparency, and accountability. Military equipment should address a demonstrable strategic requirement, expenditures should correspond reasonably to the expected security benefits, financial arrangements should remain subject to independent scrutiny, and decision-makers should be accountable for misconduct. The Lafayette affair illustrates the consequences when these principles become separated from actual procurement practices.

For Taiwan, the principal lesson is that defense modernization and democratic accountability must be pursued simultaneously. Major defense contracts should receive independent financial auditing even when technical details remain classified. Intermediaries should be formally registered, their compensation documented, and their beneficial ownership disclosed. Procurement officials should have secure reporting mechanisms and meaningful legal protection. Taiwan should also maintain strong cooperation with foreign law-enforcement and financial authorities to identify suspicious cross-border transactions and recover illicit assets. Finally, defense

procurement should be insulated as far as possible from partisan and personal political interests, with decisions based on professional military, technical, financial, and strategic assessments.

Overall, the Lafayette affair demonstrates that corruption in arms procurement is fundamentally a governance problem rather than simply a criminal or financial problem. Its significance extends beyond the purchase of a particular class of frigates because it illustrates how national security, international commerce, political power, and transnational finance can interact in ways that weaken democratic accountability. The case therefore remains an important reference for understanding why effective defense governance requires not only sophisticated military capabilities but also transparent financial systems, independent institutions, international cooperation, and sustained public oversight.

In addition, the Green Gang had a profound influence in the Republic of China and later in the National Revolutionary Army (especially the Navy) after its relocation to Taiwan. Many high-ranking officers and non-commissioned officers joined the Green Gang in the early days due to shared hometowns, security ties, or connections during the War of Resistance, forming a unique network of interpersonal relationships and ethics within the military. Therefore, I believe this murder case is related to the Green Gang.

CONCLUSION

The Taiwan Lafayette Ship Scandal demonstrates that major defense procurement projects can become sites where national security, international diplomacy, commercial interests, political power, and transnational finance intersect in ways that challenge conventional mechanisms of public accountability. The purchase of the Lafayette-class frigates emerged from Taiwan's legitimate strategic need to strengthen its naval capabilities within a highly constrained geopolitical environment. Nevertheless, the subsequent allegations of secret commissions, the involvement of intermediaries and offshore financial networks, the controversy surrounding the death of Captain Yin Ching-Feng, and the long-running international investigations transformed the procurement from a defense-modernization project into one of Taiwan's most significant corruption controversies. A central conclusion of this study is that the scandal cannot adequately be explained as the misconduct of a few individuals. Although particular actors, including intermediaries associated with the transaction, became central to investigations, the broader affair exposed institutional weaknesses that allowed questionable financial arrangements to develop across national boundaries. The complexity of the alleged commissions and the substantial differences among reported figures further demonstrate the difficulty of reconstructing corruption networks when evidence is distributed across court proceedings, investigative reporting, banking records, official investigations, and competing political claims. Consequently, the Lafayette affair should be understood as a systemic governance problem as much as an individual corruption case. The scandal also illustrates the inherent tension between secrecy and accountability in defense procurement. National security can legitimately require confidentiality concerning military capabilities, operational information, and sensitive diplomatic negotiations. However, secrecy concerning financial arrangements, intermediary compensation, beneficial ownership, and procurement decision-making can create opportunities for corruption. The case therefore suggests that security classification should not become a justification for excluding independent financial oversight. Effective defense governance requires a distinction between protecting genuinely sensitive military information and protecting commercial or political interests from legitimate scrutiny. The international dimension of the affair provides an additional lesson. The movement of alleged illicit funds through offshore companies and foreign banking systems demonstrates that national enforcement mechanisms are insufficient when corruption operates transnationally. The eventual recovery of substantial funds from Switzerland illustrates the importance of international judicial cooperation, financial intelligence, asset tracing, and beneficial-ownership transparency. Yet financial recovery alone cannot provide complete accountability. Recovering public money does not necessarily establish why questionable decisions were made, who benefited politically or financially, or which institutional safeguards failed. Finally, the Lafayette scandal reinforces the importance of institutional integrity in contemporary defense procurement. Independent auditing, transparent intermediary arrangements, whistleblower protection, judicial independence, beneficial-ownership disclosure, and international financial cooperation should form essential components of a modern procurement framework. The controversy surrounding Captain Yin Ching-Feng further demonstrates that accountability requires institutions capable of protecting officials and investigators who raise concerns about wrongdoing.

Ultimately, the significance of the Lafayette affair extends beyond the procurement of a particular class of frigates. It reveals how legitimate national-security objectives can be undermined when secrecy, political influence, weak oversight, and transnational financial complexity converge. For Taiwan and other states engaged in high-value arms procurement, the enduring lesson is that national security and public accountability should not be treated as competing objectives. Rather, transparent, independently supervised, and ethically governed procurement is itself an essential component of national security and democratic legitimacy.

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(1) All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

(2) The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

(3) Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants involved in the study.

(4) This work does not include animals as subjects.

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Figure Captions



Figure.1 La Fayette-class frigates from France (Permission is granted to copy, distribute and/or modify this document under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License, Version 1.2 or any later version published by the Free Software Foundation; with no Invariant Sections, no Front-Cover Texts, and no Back-Cover Texts. A copy of the license is included in the section entitled GNU Free Documentation License.)